OVERVIEW

VISION

Welcome to the design document for *Star Wars Galaxies: Empire Divided*. The document you hold in your hands is an overview of all the key systems comprising the game.

This document is version 2.5 of the design document. It goes into much greater detail on individual systems than previous versions. It is intended to serve as a solid overview of all the key game mechanics. Each design document is also divided into core requirements and additional features, to make it easier to scale back the scope of the game in response to time pressures. This represents the complete design and vision for the ground portion of the game, but it is also explicitly designed to be broken easily to a staged release. If it becomes necessary to do so, we can shift some of these expanded features into the space release or Live development.

The goals and vision for *Star Wars Galaxies* are ambitious, but not out of reach. From the outset, our directive was to create a game that was accessible to the broad audience that the *Star Wars* license brings. To this end, we have worked hard to develop a game design that preserves all the addiction and community that we have to expect from the most popular massively multiplayer RPGs to date, that incorporates all the latest innovations and mechanics necessary to make us competitive with second generation products in the market, but that also tries to alter those mechanics into something that is more accessible to players with less time to spend on gaming.

As you read through this design document, many things will seem familiar. A wide range of species for players to play as, carefully handcrafted adventure areas, frightening beasts to fight and alien landscapes to explore, unique and exotic items to own. Some of it will be extensions of game elements found in today's MMORPGs: a system for players to craft items and sell them, a way for players to own their own houses, and the ability for them to run vendors, essentially running their own shop.

But other things will seem less familiar. Our spawning system is radically different, for example, intended to do away with the issues of camping and long session times. We are placing an even greater emphasis on the ability to grow in-game communities, with the ability to form their own in-game governments and found their own cities. We have attempted to remove the tedium of crafting and replace it with a system that is far more dynamic. All of these things have been done in the name of shorter play sessions, greater accessibility, and mechanics that are not hack 'n' slash centered.

Star Wars Galaxies is intended to be a game that advances the genre by bringing it, for the first time, within the reach of the larger audience that massively multiplayer environments deserve. This initial release is also intended to serve as the launching pad for the eventual addition of space flight, making *SWG* the first complete science-fiction universe in the online marketplace. We hope that as you read this document, you grow as excited about the potential of this game as we are. A whole galaxy lies ahead…

Key goals for the game

1. **ACCESSIBILITY**
   The game must be easily accessible to a broad audience and a casual player. This is defined as a target of 500,000 subscribers within one year of the product's launch. The target machine for the client should be a Pentium III-550 with a GeForce or equivalent 3D hardware accelerator with 32MB of video RAM.

2. **RETENTION**
   The game must have a high retention rate for subscribers. This is defined as an average subscriber lifetime of at least twelve months.

3. **LOW COSTS**
   The game must keep backend costs low. This is defined as a profit margin on each monthly subscription fee of at least 60%.

4. **BROAD AUDIENCE**
   The game must appeal to a broad audience and support many different styles of play. The target average hours logged per player per week is 12 hours. This relates back to the target subscriber figure.

5. **COMMUNITY ORIENTED**
   The game must encourage and support a community. This relates back to the target retention rate.

6. **SCALEABLE**
   The game must be a scaleable platform, so that it remains viable several years after launch. The target viable lifetime for continued subscriber growth is five years.

It is our hope that as we continue to refine this document throughout the design process, these help us shape the design to what we actually intend as end results, rather than based merely on "what's cool." Input on this document is therefore welcome and greatly appreciated.

As a general philosophy, *Star Wars Galaxies: Empire Divided* is about creating a world for players to exist in; about creating a universe that they can shape. It is not about providing a linear narrative experience, but about giving tools to players to shape their own experiences. It is not about creating just a game for brief entertainment, but about providing an online space wherein meaningful experiences with real emotions can take place. Ultimately, these things lead to the greatest customer loyalty and the greatest possible depth in the experience.

Thematic emphasis

One of the very first exercises we went through in assessing the game design was to do a thematic analysis of the *Star Wars* property in order to make sure that what we were working on was going to satisfy the desires of the hardcore fans of the setting.

Star Wars! *Exotic worlds, epic adventure, and thrilling space combat*

Star Wars Galaxies is a persistent world environment in which players are finally able to directly participate in the age old battle between good and evil in a galaxy far, far away. Players have high expectations of this universe and we will endeavor to meet all of them (example: space flight!). We will strive to eliminate all areas of tedium from the game, and make every action possible, even repetitive tasks such as crafting, into interesting, discovery-filled experiences. The environments and choices will always be varied and dynamic.

The struggle between the Light and Dark sides of the Force, represented by the choices of players

The game will provide an ongoing tapestry and backdrop for players' virtual lives and game playing, via direct consequences in terms of the game's political system, possession of territory, etc. Players may opt not to participate in this epic struggle, in which case the meta-game of good and evil, Light and Dark sides of the Force, and political factions will only impact them in incidental ways.

Political battles to take control of the Galaxy

Players will be able to affect the standing of planets within the Galaxy via their actions, changing the political map in real, significant ways. Again, players who do not wish to engage in these activities may largely ignore them, but will still feel the effects of the ongoing maneuverings.

Interactions with other players

Every step of the way, players will find that their choices and actions affect others and are affected by others. It is still possible to live the life of a loner, but even loners do not act in isolation. Heavy emphasis is placed on community mechanics, economics, social standing, socially oriented professions, and other elements that drive interaction.

This is a game that needs to be completed quickly

All design choices will bear in mind the fact that we face a tight deadline, and must resort to staged releases and clever production tactics. Where possible we will make use of a "sandbox" approach to design, while still having the available hooks and databases for adding custom, handcrafted content later. Likewise, we will make all possible use of algorithmic content generation in order to shorten our development timeline.